



Where My Demons Hide



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Chapter 1 by Jayde Avalon

~Don't get too close, it's dark inside; it's where my demons hide, it's where my demons hide.~ --
Imagine Dragons; "Demons"

—

He saw my scales.

It had to be the day he kissed me. For the first time, even.

And he didn't just see my scales...he saw my fangs, too. And my eyes--my freakish, fiery-colored slit-pupil eyes.

Now I'm running from him, running from everyone. I've been hiding my true dragon nature successfully for 5 years, ever since I was 11 and turned, bit by bit. Now it's going to get out. I can't stay here; they'll kill me. I'm a freak.

Dammit, I knew I shouldn't have tried to save that kid being raped in an alley.

I should've known the dragon would surface.

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Chapter 2 Wars

We'd been going out for a while. He was kind and nice and funny. We were great together and friends. I should have known this would happen. He was good.

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I was - not.

I'm not sure if being a dragon makes you evil, but that's the impression everyone got. I never wanted to be like that, but my transformation wasn't complete. I had yet to grow my wings.

I had sensed something in the alley as Jack walked me home, and we had investigated. I rushed forward to push the rapist off, and then I half turned in anger. The rapist fell down and tried to back off, but Jack -

"You're - you're one of them. You're a monster!" He called out in shock, backing out of the alleyway in shock.

"Jack-" I called out, but I didn't follow. I let him go, my heart breaking.

The boy I'd saved stared at me. "Thank you." He said, before standing up and walking off as well. The words weren't even slightly afraid.

There was a familiar sense about him, but one I'd never felt before. Before the shock set in I wondered what that meant.

After that, I ran away, terrified. I hoped with all my heart I'd never see Jack again. I couldn't stand it if he hated me. I hoped I would never see anyone from my town again

But it seemed fate had other plans.

Chapter 3 by R



Dragons. We're some of the last monsters in existence. Knightly pursuits led to the near or total extinction of so many creatures, of trolls and goblins and chimeras.

It seems the only monsters left around are those who can transform humans. Vampirism and Lycanthropy are commonly talked about, but they're easier to catch. The symptoms draw them out, and whole communities fall. The numbers dwindle but they're still present.

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That was just mindless fantasy, however. Reality was that I had spent the last week hanging out in the woods eating berries and small woodland creatures that I'd roasted with my fiery breath.

I had to go in to town. There was no way I could spend all of this time in the woods. Would they buy 'traveler who has been in the woods for far too long'? It was the truth, mostly.

I focused intently on being human. I walked forward, towards the town, hopefully the inhabitants would be kindly people. Hoping the dragon wouldn't emerge again.

Hoping this wouldn't be an utter disaster.

Chapter 4 by Ryan DeAngelis



As I drew closer to the town, I saw that the center was just a glorified market of run-down wooden shacks manned by run-down people. My pace was extremely slow, partially because I was nervous about what the people would think about me, and partially because I was really intent on staying as I was. That effort must have shown, because when I eventually got to the counter, a man with a long, gray beard directed me to the bathroom.

"I'm fine," I replied, trying to seem casual while maintaining the effort I was giving. He turned back to the produce he had been looking at.

"You're not from here now, are ya?" he said without looking at me. I shuddered in a moment of surprise.

"Um, no. How'd you know?"

He turned and scanned me with his eyes before he spoke. "Darlin', you look like you just came out of a fight in the woods. You can't be from here lookin' like that." Then he came closer and whispered the scariest thing I've ever heard.

"Besides, ya don't look like our kind."

Chapter 5 by Ryan DeAngelis

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That one statement instantly fixed my gaze, staring at his weird
fixated gaze. Did he know? Putting my hand to my
face, either I was feeling scales or goosebumps, I couldn't tell. I began to walk away from the

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square, which quickly turned into a sprint. Turning behind a corner, I began to search myself for any signs that I was changing. None, thankfully. Okay, take deep breaths. Calm down. It's fine. Just turn back and face them. No one will care.

Slowly I turned my head around the corner. The people were facing away. I steadily made my way back, trying to not make eye contact with anyone. I perused the different little stores and their contents (mostly overripe fruit), hiding myself from the others. Out of the corner of my eye, the man seemed to be staring at me, possibly with a few others, but I'm not going to turn to confirm that.

Then they began walking towards me. About five of them all directed at me. What was it that they wanted? What could they do with me? My breathing became quicker and choppy as I worried over what they might say. They stopped a few feet away from me, and the same guy from earlier was the one to speak first.

"Hey, lady, we want to talk with ya."

"Who? Me?" I asked without turning, the nervousness evident in my speech.

"Yes, you. Turn around, we just wanna ask ya somethin'."

I slowly turned to them, keeping my eyes directly parallel to the floor. I had no will or desire to face them whatsoever.

"Oh, come on," he griped. "Raise your head. Nothin's gonna happen to ya."

I looked up at the group as if there was a spring pulling my chin to my neck that I had to fight. I regretted it instantly when I saw the looks on their faces.

Chapter 6 by R



I heard the whispers of dragonborn echo through the crowd. I stared at them. There were too many people here to escape, and I didn't want to hurt them.

There were fear in all of the eyes. See more of Story Wars

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"What is it you wanted to do?" he asked, his voice a mumble of feet and a wrinkling of clothes, until he finally spoke.

"I get it, see. My pack and I, we understand what it's like to be hunted and feared. But you, dragon? You need to learn control, and fast."

Werewolves. Of course they were werewolves. Humans might fear the dragonborn, but wolves were different. The two were practically at war. I'd never met a werewolf before, but I knew of the violence. 'Let them tear each other apart' I'd hear people say.

Now I stood amongst the pack, staring at me in terror and anticipation. They were ragtag, and I wondered if the village had been built by them, or if they'd found a ghost town.

Or made one.

"That wasn't a question." I said slowly. Could I take them all on at once? Could I escape out of here? The questions were the same, but wolves were different than humans. Faster. Stronger. Even a group like these.

"Listen, Lady, no disrespect," His accent grew stronger on disrespect, making the word seem fake. "But I've talked to the folks, and we just wanted to ask you one thing before you left town." I stared at him, waiting. "Have you ever killed a human?"

I stared at the words. Had I? In all of my accidents, all of that fear, all of the outrage, had I ever actually done it? Killed someone? There were times I got close, with the rapist, but I thought not.

"No. Never." I said, staring them all in the eye. "I understand that I'm not welcome here. Will you let me leave?"

They watched me, intense, and I flinched as a young woman stepped forward. Their eyes had turned from fear to something else when I hadn't noticed. She embraced me in a tight hug.

"We can't let you stay here." She said softly. "None of us could ever trust you, you have to understand. But I've heard word of a safe haven. Our town has certain - treaties - with the dragon born there."

"You keep their location secret, or I will make sure you are never seen again," she asked, and she nodded.

"Go there. They won't like you, but they will protect you. We can do for you."

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I stared at her, and at the crowd. All of this kindness, where fear had been. Why? It made no sense. No one should be this trusting, not to a monster like me. A horror like me. They should hate me, fear me, want to destroy me.

Instead, I was offered a coat - old, shabby, and rather muddy, but better than the torn up thing I wore. Someone handed me shoes that had actual soles, and they led me out of town.

I walked in the direction the town had told me. Maybe, maybe there was something good in the world after all. The sort of good that aligned with me.

Maybe I could be good.

Chapter 7 by R



I walked through the woods, searching for this haven. I didn't know what I was expecting. A glorious, shining city? Some abandoned town? A system of caves?

I certainly didn't expect what I found.

Walking, carefully through the tall trees, I started to sniff at the sky. There was something off here, in the forest. Suddenly there was a cracking sound, and something fell down before me.

It was a person.

No, it wasn't a person, it was a dragon. Their scales glistened in the slowly dropping sunlight. The dragon stood up to look me over, and I could see the sword in their hand. It looked deadly.

"Why have you come here?" He said, voice low and sharp, and I stared at him. What was there to say? The wolf pack had made it clear that they weren't supposed to tell me I'd gotten directions from me.

"I'm just a wanderer, looking for safety." I said cautiously, and let my scales shine. Suddenly, there was the fluttering of even more wings, as two more dragons glided down from the trees.

"I recognize you." One of them said. "You're not anything more human. It was the boy from what had only been a few days ago, but he's not like before. She's the rogue who saved me, Nalis."

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The one with the sword grunted. "We'll let you come up, but you'd better watch yourself, rogue." I stared at the scene, confused. What was happening.

The boy grabbed my arm, and his wings extended, flying upwards in to the tree tops. I freaked out, clutching on to him for dear life. If this was flying, I never wanted to grow my wings.

Then, I finally found out what the safe haven was, and how it had stayed hidden. It wasn't a town, or a cave system, but an extensive city built in the tree tops. I was in awe."

"The council will want to meet with you." The one who'd been called Nalis said. "It's been a long time since we accepted a rogue in to the community."

I followed him on the rope bridges, trying not to stare down at the far off forest floor. Had I made the right choice in coming here?

The boy who's name I still did not know patted my arm in comfort as we walked towards what I could only assume was the council building.

Chapter 8 by Jayde Avalon



The room I had been given in the public inn was like any other, but with a few marked differences. The vanity in the bathroom had a few jars of oils and gels I didn't recognize, and the bath had unusual soaps around the rim. Upon closer examination, I found the soaps to be specialized for reptilian scales, and the oils and creams to be special scale moisturizers and claw lubricants.

Of course. This inn is for dragons and half-breeds, Dragonborn.

I was at the vanity reveling in the fantastic feeling that the oils gave my scales when a knock on my door made me nearly jump out of my skin...er, scales...I guess. Completely forgetting to pull my tunic back over my torso, I hurried to the door and swung it open.

"Hello, erm," the boy I had saved ages ago--Talien as he had told me--glanced awkwardly at my scale-covered torso and the salve in my hand. I glanced down at myself as well. To my horror, I realized that my breasts were still exposed, though the really private parts of them were covered with... "Sorry!" I mumbled to Talien. "What's up?"

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"The Council has invited you to dine with them this evening. I am to help you find a suitable gown and escort you to the dining room." Talien gave a small bow. "I am to wait here, whether within or outside your room is your choice, but either way I will respect your privacy."

I choose to let Talien into my guest room while I return to the bathroom and shut the door. Several minutes later I emerge to find a lady with a rather frightful reptilian tail waving about carrying an armload of simple yet lovely gowns and robes. Some time later, after plenty of fussing over my figure and height, I found myself attired in a floor-length gown of forest green velvet with long, flowing sleeves and modest golden trim on the collar and sleeves, all complemented by a belt of golden floral pattern. Simple, but lovely.

With a nod of approval from the lady and a smile from Talien, the latter leads me through the tree-top village to what appears to be a banquet hall. The Council is easily distinguished from the rest of the Dragonkind with their black tunics and silver armor and leggings and an emblem on their chest, looking something like a pair of mirrored silver dragons on a red embroidered background. It was beautiful.

I was seated across from the Council, and Talien sat alongside them. /He's Council?/ A waiter with weird claw-like nails and thin, stringy hair served me a delicate fluted glass of sweet-smelling wine. Moscato. Very fine, too, by the taste of it. The waiters next brought huge platters piled with steaming, delicious-smelling rice, vegetable, and meat dishes with game I didn't recognize. My mouth began to water; I hadn't eaten well at all in days.

Someone beside Nalis rises and gently taps her wine glass with a fork. Everyone present—half-dragon, full dragon, and human alike—turned to look at our table. I blushed with nervousness.

"Ladies and gentlemen," the Council head spoke out with a strong voice. "Some, or most, of you may be aware that we took in a stranger last night. The Council debated over what is to be done with said stranger. Lady, please rise and state your name."

I obeyed. "Lassetra," I said as loudly as my trembling voice could manage.

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I held my breath, nearly dying of suspense. Could this be it? And end to the running? No more hiding? A place to finally call home, where no one would hate me, but would accept me for what I am?

Dare I hope?

A woman rose and began to clap. One after another, others rose and clapped, until the entire banquet was an uproar of applause. I was dumbfounded. Talien walked around behind me and clapped me on the back.

“Welcome home, friend. You are our sister now.”

the end

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